

Brown-headed *Apalis* *Apalis alticola* occurring alongside Grey *Apalis* *A. cinerea* in the Ngurumans, southwestern Kenya

The Nguruman Hills rise to over 2500 m, and form the western wall of the Rift Valley immediately to the west of Lake Magadi. While the highlands themselves extend southward into Tanzania, the main block of forest is entirely within Kenya, though smaller, fragmented patches do occur south in the Loliondo and Crater Highlands.

The Brown-headed *Apalis* *Apalis alticola* is mainly a central African montane species occurring from Angola and northern Zambia to northern Malawi and the southern Tanzanian highlands, re-appearing again in the Mbulu and Crater Highlands of northern Tanzania. Throughout its range it occurs alongside numerous other species of apalis, and in recent years Benson *et al.* (1971), Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1980) and Dowsett-Lemaire (1983, 1989) have all considered it conspecific with the Grey *Apalis* *A. cinerea*, on account of their similar vocalizations, though nowhere in its previously known range did the two forms (*alticola* and *cinerea*) occur together.

The similarity and complexity of apalis vocalizations, particularly among many closely related forms, is well known, and has been discussed in detail by Chappuis (1980) and Dowsett-Lemaire (1986), while their ecological requirements and segregation in the Malawi forests are discussed by Dowsett-Lemaire (1983, 1989).

During the period 9–10 December 1990, I observed a group of three *A. alticola* along the forest edge near Entasekera village in the Ngurumans, close to, and frequently in apparent vocal competition with Chestnut-throated *Apalis* *A. porphyrolaema*. Altogether no less than five species of apalis were seen around Entasekera (altitude 1950 m), each with quite distinct ecological segregation.

Grey *Apalis* *A. cinerea* and Black-throated *Apalis* *A. jacksoni* occurred commonly in the forest interior, frequently in mixed feeding parties, while the Yellow-breasted *Apalis* *A. flavida* occupied the riverine acacia woodlands. Although on occasions *A. porphyrolaema* was observed alongside both *cinerea* and *jacksoni*, and *cinerea* was at times close to *flavida*, at no time was *alticola* seen to associate with or occur alongside either *jacksoni* or *cinerea*, remaining very much along the forest edge, either alone or close to *porphyrolaema*.

While the call of *alticola* is certainly very similar to that of *cinerea* (as shown by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1980)) it is well known that the calls of many closely related *Apalis* species are so much alike, except to the ear of an experienced bio-acoustician, with two clearly closely related, but differently plumaged forms occurring in the same area, it might well be prudent at this point to treat *alticola* and *cinerea* as separate species, as recently proposed by Sibley & Monroe (1990).

Acknowledgements

I thank Mr S. Rozwadowski who first observed a pair of Brown-headed Apalises in the Ngurumans during September 1990 and who later brought it to my attention. These records represent a small though not totally unexpected extension of range, and the first record of *A. alticola* from Kenya. I am also grateful to Prof D. A. Zimmerman for his comments on the first draft of this note.

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Unusual bird records from Western Kenya including a new breeding record

During a short visit to Western Kenya in September 1991 I recorded the following species which are unusual in the area.

Shining Blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadibrachys* One was seen briefly on a wooded stream at Alupe, north of Busia (Lewis & Pomeroy 1989: square 48A) on 2 September. Although the views were brief the dark blue upperparts with paler blue stripe down the mantle and rump, and blackish bill were noted. There is a previous record from this site on 21 August 1990 (East African Bird Report 1990, *Scopus* in press).

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis* Two seen at a wooded creek near Mungatsi (48C) on 2 September. An adult was seen in company with a juvenile in dense low bushes alongside the stream. The adult was extremely secretive but the juvenile was quite conspicuous and uttered begging calls. The adult was not heard to call and identification was based on the warm brown unstreaked upperparts, lack of dark lores and whitish underparts. The juvenile was brighter in colour on the upperparts and had a yellowish-buff wash on the underparts. Although the adult was not actually seen to feed the juvenile, the behaviour of the two birds indicated that the juvenile was dependent and was being cared for by the adult. This would be a new breeding record for QSD 48C.

Orange Weaver *Ploceus aurantius* A male was seen well at close range in low bushes along a creek near Mungatsi (48C) on 2 September. The slender pink bill, black ocular mark and bright orange-yellow colouration were noted.

Black-bellied Seed-cracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus* Two observed along a wooded stream at Alupe (48A) on 2 September. The birds were only seen in flight, my attention being drawn to the first bird by a curious sharp metallic call. I was able to see that the entire head, breast, flanks, uppertail coverts and upperside of the tail were crimson, the belly